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- ART. VI.—1. *Notes and Emendations to the Text of SHAKESPEARE'S Plays, from Early Manuscript Corrections in a Copy of the Folio 1632, in the Possession of J. PAYNE COLLIER, Esq., F.S.A., forming a Supplemental Volume to the Works of SHAKESPEARE*, by the same Editor. The Second Edition, revised and enlarged. London: Whitaker & Co. 1853. 8vo. pp. 528.
2. *Manuscript Corrections from a Copy of the Fourth Folio of SHAKESPEARE'S Plays*. Boston: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields. 1854. 8vo. pp. 51.
3. *The Text of SHAKESPEARE vindicated from the Interpolations and Corruptions advocated by JOHN PAYNE COLLIER, Esq., in his Notes and Emendations*. By SAMUEL WELLER SINGER. London: W. Pickering. 1853. 8vo. pp. 312.
4. *A Few Notes on SHAKESPEARE; with Occasional Remarks on the Emendations of the Manuscript Corrector in MR. COLLIER'S Copy of the Folio 1632*. By the REV. ALEXANDER DYCE. London: John Russell Smith. 1853. 8vo. pp. 156.
5. *Remarks on MR. J. P. COLLIER'S and MR. C. KNIGHT'S Editions of SHAKESPEARE*. By the REV. ALEXANDER DYCE. London: Edward Moxon. 1844.

It seems strange that the text of Shakespeare, which has been in existence less than two hundred and fifty years, should be far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old, during nearly fifteen of which it existed only in manuscript. The industry of collators and commentators, indeed, has collected a formidable array of "various readings" in the Greek text of the Scriptures; but the number of these which have any good claim to be received, and which also seriously affect the sense, is so small, that they may almost be counted upon the fingers. With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by the general consent of scholars, that any dispute as to its meaning must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubt respecting the words themselves. But in

every one of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays, there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large proportion of which materially affect the meaning of the passages in which they occur. The publication of Mr. Collier's recent volume, which, according to some critics, has not settled a single point which was formerly in controversy, has given us about a thousand new topics for the commentators to quarrel about. Many passages in the received text are also admitted to be hopelessly corrupt, as no consistent meaning can be given to them without doing violence to the language.

It would be a curious and important investigation to assign all the causes of this astonishing difference. But a full discussion of this subject would occupy a volume rather than an article; and our only purpose here is to speak briefly of the circumstances which have caused the text of our great dramatist to be so maimed and perverted, and have left so many passages to be settled by every reader according to his own taste and fancy.

The first of these causes may be found in the character of Shakespeare himself,—in his unconsciousness of the greatness of his work, and his consequent indifference about its preservation. He wrote, not for the press, but for the theatre; and the only success of any one of his plays which he seems to have cared for, was its effect in swelling the profits of the theatrical company in which he was both an actor and a shareholder. He did not superintend, and there is no reason to believe that he even authorized, the publication of one of his dramas. The interests of the company were best served by retaining them in manuscript and in their own possession, so as to prevent the representation of them in rival theatres. Thus, not even written copies of them were multiplied beyond the needs of this single band of performers. Surreptitious copies sometimes got out, and piratical booksellers published them, but generally in so imperfect and corrupt a state that the author might have been puzzled to recognize his own progeny. Yet Shakespeare seems to have given himself no further concern about the matter than was implied in taking better care of the manuscripts of his later plays, very few of which appeared in print before the collective edition of his works was published, in 1623, seven years after his death.

It may appear derogatory to the reputation of our great dramatist, to assert that he wrote his plays for profit rather than fame. But we have no doubt that gain was his only motive. Of the publication of his Poems, indeed, — the *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Lucrece*, — he seems to have taken more care, as if he looked to the good opinion that men might form of them. He certainly wrote dedications of them to the Earl of Southampton, and, as the tradition goes, received a splendid proof of this nobleman's munificence in return. He must therefore have prepared the manuscript for the press; and the text is accordingly found in tolerably good condition, having given but little trouble to the commentators. But the plays were written to please such audiences as thronged the rude theatres of that period, — cheap wooden structures, open to the sky at the place designed for the spectators, most of whom were also compelled to stand on the ground, either in front or at the sides. The applause of such a rabble was of little worth; all that was expected of them was their presence and the price of their admission. Provided the performances were attractive enough to allure a throng, the players cared for nothing further; and Shakespeare, who was one of the busiest among them, — at once actor, playwright, and shareholder, — was equally well satisfied. At times the company was honored with a request, or a command rather, to perform at the houses of some of the nobility, or even at court; but this honor was prized not so much for its own sake, as for the protection which it insured them, and the consequent permission to continue their gainful efforts to please the populace.

The English drama, it must be remembered, was then in its infancy; it was hardly twenty years old when Shakespeare entered upon the profession. The Mysteries and Moralities which preceded it were not of much higher rank than the performances of Punch and Judy, or of the Doctor and his Merry Andrew, at a much later day. The players seem, at first, to have been merely tolerated, not licensed. Under Edward VI., severe measures were taken to repress dramatic performances and the publication of plays. For two years, under Mary, they were totally inhibited. The government of Eliza-

both discountenanced them at first, but by degrees they were permitted. In 1572, an act was passed to limit the number of itinerant performers, and it was renewed with additional severity in 1597. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen succeeded in excluding them from the precincts of the city, but they found shelter in the liberties. Not till 1576 was any building set apart for theatrical representations; previously, they had only temporary accommodations in structures designed for other purposes. The Puritanic feeling seems to have been aroused against them; while they appear to have found favor with the nobility, and some indulgence at court. Thus, the several associations of players called themselves the companies of the Queen, the Earls of Leicester, Derby, and Sussex, and the Lords Hunsdon and Strange. The connection thus implied was probably little more than nominal; but the persecuted actors seem to have found some protection under it. Their chief dependence was on the strong attachment of the populace, with whom theatrical performances were as much in favor as bear-baiting, and but little more reputable. After Shakespeare had been on the stage about ten years, he was obliged to join his comrades in a very humble petition to the Privy Council, because some of the inhabitants of Blackfriars, where their playhouse was situated, had sent in a formal remonstrance, not only against the repairing and enlargement of the building, a work which had been already begun, but against any more dramatic performances. By the staid and respectable citizens of those days, the theatre was evidently regarded as a mere nuisance. The Council granted the petition of the actors so far as to allow the repairs to be completed, but forbade the contemplated enlargement of the house.

Little honor, but much profit, was to be expected from writing plays under these circumstances. Such was evidently Shakespeare's mode of looking at the matter; and many of his characteristics as a dramatist may be partially accounted for by this explanation of his purpose. Hence the wildness, freedom, and sweetness of his style, uncurbed by critics' rules; hence the mixture of tragedy and comedy, — the repetition of favorite characters, like Falstaff with his attendants, in sev-

eral plays,\* — the frequent introduction of a clown or jester, and of scraps of old ballads or songs; hence the verbal quips and conceits, the presence of which we now regard as a blemish; hence, also, the choice of the subjects of his plays, most of which are drawn from popular stories and legends, and from the history of England, which, even as late as Henry VIII., had already become legendary in the memory of the illiterate populace. We have no doubt that the Porter's speech in

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\* The title-pages of the surreptitious quarto editions of the plays which were published in Shakespeare's lifetime are very significant, for they show which characters in them had especially commended them to the favor of the populace. Thus, in 1598, we have an edition of "The History of Henrie the Fourth; *with the battell at Shreusburie, betweene the King and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North. With the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstalffe.*" In 1600, we have "The Second Part of Henrie the fourth, continuing to his death and coronation of Henrie the fift. *With the humours of Sir John Falstaffe and swaggering Pistoll.*" The title-page of Henry the Fifth, published the same year, does not fail to specify "his battell fought at Agin Court in France. *Together with Auntient Pistoll.*" Still more promising in its adaptation to the tastes of the populace was the bill of fare for The Merry Wives of Windsor, which was first printed in 1602: — "A most pleasaunt and excellent conceited Comedie, of Syr John Falstaffe and the merrie Wives of Windsor. Entermixed with sundrie variable and pleasing humors, of Syr Hugh the Welch Knight, Justice Shallow, and his wise Cousin M. Slender. With the swaggering vaine of Auncient Pistoll and Corporall Nym." If this seems too much like a modern title-page to Mother Goose, it should be remembered that the populace are always children, and Shakespeare certainly treated them like children when catering for their tastes.

How he pressed English history into his service when laboring for the same end, may be further conjectured from the title-page of Richard III., first published in 1597. "The Tragedy of King Richard the third. Containing, His treacherous plots against his brother Clarence; the pittiefull murder of his innocent nephews: his tyrannicall vsurpation: with the whole course of his detested life, and most deserved death." This reads like an extract from Mr. Dickens's "Child's History of England." To the vulgar, history, even that of their own country, is only a great story-book, not a whit more authentic, and certainly not more entertaining, than Shakespeare's plays or Scott's novels. We think that a sufficient argument might be founded on this very title-page against the whimsical Horace Walpole's "Historic Doubts" respecting Richard III.; for it shows what was the universal impression of the great body of the illiterate English people respecting that sovereign only about a hundred years after his death, — a period surely not too long for a very accurate portraiture of him to be handed down in household tradition. The grandfathers, if not the fathers, of some of those who first saw Richard III. played at the Blackfriars Theatre, might have told their children how the crooked-backed tyrant looked just before the battle of Bosworth Field. There was much truth as well as point in the reply of a statesman, who, when challenged for an authority respecting an alleged fact in English history, boldly answered, "Shakespeare's Plays, — the only History of England I ever read."

Macbeth, which has given so much offence, was written to please that least reputable portion of a theatrical audience, which is accommodated now-a-days in the shilling gallery, and was designed to be omitted when the play was performed at court, or at a nobleman's house. When he wrote exclusively for "gentle" readers, and designed to dedicate his performance to a nobleman, Shakespeare's tone and manner were very different. Witness either the *Venus and Adonis*, or the *Lucrece*, which are perfectly regular poems, very uniform in versification, and showing artistic unity in the plot and embellishments. The remark may appear a bold one, but we fully believe that Shakespeare no more thought of *publishing* his Plays, than the late Joe Grimaldi did of printing his Pantomimes. They were designed exclusively for the stage, and for the exclusive benefit of the theatrical company to which their author belonged. They were not intended to add to his reputation, but to fill his purse; and this purpose they accomplished admirably.

Shakespeare came up to London a penniless young man, his father being on the verge of bankruptcy, and a stain resting on his own character from the youthful indiscretions which had forced him into an ill-assorted marriage, at the age of eighteen, with a woman older than himself, and had made the most influential country gentleman in the neighborhood of his birthplace his implacable enemy. The only friends he could claim in the great metropolis were the players whose acquaintance he had made, when, in the course of an itinerant round of performances, they had visited his native village; and his only resource was to join their company, and make himself useful in the best way he could. His post at first was an humble one, for he was reckoned only as the twelfth in a company of sixteen members; but he rose rapidly. "In 1596, he was fifth in a company of eight members; and in 1603, he was second in a company of nine members." Only eleven years after his seemingly desperate attempt to seek his fortune in the metropolis, he had become rich enough to buy "New Place," a "great house" in his native town, and establish his family in it; and five years afterwards he bought one hundred and seven acres of neighboring land, and attached it to his

dwelling. In less than a twelvemonth, he purchased two other tenements in Stratford, so that he was now a considerable landowner. After making a very cautious estimate, Mr. Collier considers £400 a year (equal to at least £1,600, or \$8,000, at the present value of money) the very lowest amount at which his income can be reckoned in 1608." Ward, who was vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon less than fifty years after Shakespeare's death, says his income was so large "that he spent at the rate of £1,000 a year, as I have heard." At the early age of forty-eight, still in the prime of his physical and mental strength, but seemingly thinking that he was rich enough and had worked long enough, he dissolved his connection with the playhouse, quitted London, and went down to end his days in quiet and inglorious ease at his native place, apparently unconscious that he had done any thing extraordinary. His plays—the foundation upon which has since risen the towering fabric of a reputation "the greatest in our literature, the greatest in all literature"—were carelessly left behind in London, for his old associates to do with them whatsoever they would,—the larger number of them still existing only in manuscript, in carelessly written playhouse copies,—the others in print, indeed, but only in pirated, unfaithful, and curiously maimed and distorted editions.

And in manuscript or in these "stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors, that exposed them," they remained till Shakespeare's death, and for seven years afterwards. He seems not to have bestowed another thought upon them after quitting London in 1612. He gave no direction about them in his will, whence we infer that his right of ownership in them had ceased, probably as soon as he sold out his other theatrical property. "Sundry manuscript plays" were perhaps enumerated in the inventory, together with "the wardrobe and properties of the same playhouse," estimated at £500, and four out of the twenty shares into which the joint stock was divided, when the whole pecuniary interest of William Shakespeare in the Blackfriars and Globe Theatres was disposed of to his old associates or successors. Prospero broke his staff, abjured his magic, and though he did not exactly "drown his



book," he certainly took as little care of it as if he had thrown it overboard.\* Its new owners guarded their acquisition with more watchfulness than its author had shown. "With the single exception of *Othello*, which came out in quarto in 1622, no other new drama by Shakespeare appeared in a printed form between 1609 and the date of the publication of the folio in 1623." The editors of this noted volume, the chief source of "the received text" of the plays, were Heminge and CondeU, two of Shakespeare's old associates in the theatre. In dedicating it to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, they represent themselves only as performing a pious "office to the dead,—to procure his Orphans," (as they appropriately term these abandoned children of his brain,) "Guardians; without ambition either of self-profit or fame: onely to keep the memory of so worthy a Friend and Fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his plays to your most noble patronage." This was a very proper tone for them to assume; but if they did not act for "self-profit," they certainly had no regard for the interest or rights of Shakespeare's heirs and natural representatives. Whatever profit may have accrued from the publication was shared between the printers and themselves.

We will now borrow again from Mr. Collier's excellent "Life" of Shakespeare, to which we have already been largely indebted.

"It is singular, if we rely upon several coeval authorities, how little our great dramatist was, about this period [1599], known and admired for his plays. Richard Barnfield published his 'Encomion of Lady Perunia' in 1598 (the year in which the list of twelve of Shakespeare's plays was printed by Meres), and from a copy of verses entitled 'Remembrance of some English Poets,' we quote the following notice of Shakespeare:—

'And Shakespeare, thou, whose honey-flowing vein,  
Pleasing the world, thy praises doth contain,  
Whose *Venus*, and whose *Lucrece*, sweet and chaste,

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\* As *The Tempest* was written not more than a year or two before Shakespeare quitted London, and as it is even probable that it was the latest play which he wrote, it seems not too fanciful to conjecture, that, in the magnificent soliloquy of Prospero here alluded to, he had in mind his own contemplated withdrawal from the theatre, and abandonment of the dramatic art.

Thy name in Fame's immortal book hath placed ;  
 Live ever you, at least in fame live ever :  
 Well may the body die, but fame die never.'

"Here Shakespeare's popularity, as 'pleasing the world,' is noticed; but the proofs of it are not derived from the stage, where his dramas were in daily performance before crowded audiences, but from the success of his 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece,' which had gone through various editions. Precisely to the same effect, but a still stronger instance, we may refer to a play in which both Burbage and Kempe are introduced as characters, the one of whom had obtained such celebrity in the tragic, and the other in the comic parts in Shakespeare's dramas; we allude to 'The Return from Parnassus,' which was indisputably acted before the death of Queen Elizabeth. In a scene where two young students are discussing the merits of particular poets, one of them speaks thus of Shakespeare:—

'Who loves *Adonis* love or *Lucrece* rape,  
 His sweeter verse contains heart-robbing life ;  
 Could but a graver subject him content,  
 Without love's foolish, lazy languishment.'

"Not the most distant allusion is made to any of his dramatic productions, although the poet criticized by the young students immediately before Shakespeare was Ben Jonson, who was declared to be 'the wittiest fellow, of a bricklayer, in England,' but 'a slow inventor.' Hence we might be led to imagine, that, even down to as late a period as the commencement of the seventeenth century, the reputation of Shakespeare depended rather upon his poems than upon his plays; almost as if productions for the stage were not looked upon, at that date, as part of the recognized literature of the country." — Collier's *Shakespeare*, Vol. I. pp. clxxix., clxxx.

Other playwrights seem to have been as careless as Shakespeare was about the fate *in print* of their dramatic performances, however anxious they may have been for success on the stage. If the play had been performed and applauded by the audience, and had thus put money in the author's purse, it had done its work; no gain in point of literary reputation was to be expected from printing what belonged to a department of literature that was held in so light esteem as stage-plays. Opinion on this point was just the reverse of what it is now-a-days, when poets, like Byron, Coleridge, and Browning, write dramas to be printed, but not to be performed. When "The Rape of Lucrece," by Thomas Heywood, was

first printed, in 1608, its author took the unusual course of informing the public, in the Preface, that he had consented to its publication. Yet the impression is full of the grossest blunders, so that we may be sure he did not think it necessary even to see the proof-sheets. Mr. Collier says this edition, "with the author's *imprimatur*, is, we think, the worst specimen of typography that ever met our observation."

"We cannot wonder," adds Mr. Collier, "at the errors in plays surreptitiously procured and hastily printed, which was the case with many impressions of that day. Upon this point, Heywood is an unexceptionable witness; and he tells us of one of his dramas,

‘that some by stenography drew  
The plot, put in print, scarce one word true.’

Other dramatists make the same complaint; and there can be no doubt that it was the practice so to defraud authors and actors, and to palm wretchedly disfigured pieces upon the public as genuine and authentic works."—*Ibid.* p. clxxviii.

Plays were falsely attributed to Shakespeare, and published with his name on the title-page, in which it is certain that he had had no hand whatever. Yet he seems to have taken no pains to expose the fraud, or to relieve himself from the imputation of having written what would surely have done him little credit. We ought not to wonder, then, that, when by the fraud of printers, and perhaps by the connivance of some of the inferior actors, very imperfect and disfigured copies of his dramas got abroad, and were published as his genuine productions, he did not disavow them, or complain of the blunders, as Heywood did, but allowed them to pass unnoticed. Sixteen of his plays were thus printed in quarto during his lifetime; and with the addition of *Othello*, which was thus printed in 1622, they formed the only means which the public had of judging his performances, except from their representation on the stage, till the appearance of the first folio edition of all his dramas, in 1623. Many of these plays in the quarto form passed through several editions, the later issue being sometimes a mere reprint of the former, and sometimes claiming to be "newly corrected, augmented, and amended." With regard to the whole sixteen we find no reason to doubt the positive assertion of Heminge and Condell, the editors

of the first folio, that they were "stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors." Some of them do not contain much more than skeletons of the plays, as they now exist, and are also deformed with blunders so gross, that they cannot be accounted for except on the supposition, favored by the lines already quoted from Heywood, that they were copied out, in part at least, by stenography, from the recitation by the players; and, of course, that many passages were imperfectly heard, and imperfectly preserved.\* Others may have been printed, in part, from imperfect playhouse copies, surreptitiously obtained; that is, from transcripts of only one part, or of the speeches belonging to one personage in the drama, as they were copied out to be studied by individual performers. Copy for the printers may also have been obtained, or corrected, by inducing some of the actors to repeat their parts slowly at an alehouse or tavern, so that the words could be taken down. A very defective copy, obtained by the first of these methods, for the earliest edition in quarto, may have been subsequently "augmented and amended" by the other expedients, for the later issues. Mr. Charles Knight, a strenuous defender of the untenable hypothesis that Shakespeare himself authorized some of these quarto publications, and even furnished the manuscript for them, they being the first rude sketch of dramas which he afterwards greatly enlarged and improved, is obliged to confess that five out of the sixteen were certainly pirated and extremely defective editions.

We consider this hypothesis untenable, because it is very unlikely that Shakespeare, who allowed the grandest produc-

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\* That certain booksellers printed a number of plays, surreptitiously procured, in 1637, we learn from an edict of the Lord Chamberlain, addressed to the Stationers' Company, in June of that year, in which he states that complaints had been made to him to that effect by the players, the legal proprietors of those "books of comedies, tragedies, interludes, histories, and the like, which they had (for the special service of his Majesty and for their own use) bought and provided at very dear and high rates." The players added, that by these unfair publications, "not only they themselves had much prejudice, but the books much corruption, to the injury and disgrace of the authors." That a high price was set by the players upon the manuscripts in their possession of plays as yet unpublished, we know from the direct testimony of Humphrey Moseley, in the preface to the collection of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas which he published in 1647.

tions of his mature genius, like Macbeth, the Tempest, Othello, Julius Cæsar, and many others, to remain in manuscript throughout his lifetime, and who left no directions about publishing them even in his will, should have voluntarily given to the world the first rude sketches of his earlier plays,— sketches which soon appeared to him so imperfect, that they needed to be entirely rewritten before they could keep their place even upon the stage. Besides, it may reasonably be doubted whether Shakespeare ever retraced his steps, and took up again for more elaborate and careful treatment a subject which he had once dismissed as a drama fit for representation. He rewrote, indeed, the plays of others ; but we have direct and unimpeachable evidence that he did not rewrite a speech, a line, or a word in a play of his own. More than any secular writer whom the world has known, he realized the theory of inspiration. Heminge and Condell, his associates and the editors of the first complete edition of his plays, inform us explicitly, that “*what he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.*” And Ben Jonson, also his intimate friend, says, “I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line.” Honest Ben directly adds, it is true, “My answer hath been, Would he had blotted a thousand !” But Shakespeare and he had very different notions of composition. His dramas were wrought out, as if he had been still piling bricks, with the sweat of his brow ; while the thoughts of the gentle bard of Avon voluntarily “moved harmonious numbers.” Jonson may have rewritten his plays, but Shakespeare never.

With regard to the quarto editions, whether they were all pirated or not, it is indisputable that they are lamentably maimed, botched, and defective. The first of them was Romeo and Juliet, which appeared in 1597, seven or eight years after Shakespeare began to write for the stage. Two years afterwards, a second edition of the same play appeared, claiming to be “newly corrected, augmented, and amended” ; and in three subsequent issues, the “augmentations” had become so large, that while, in Stevens’s reprint, the first edi-

tion occupies only *seventy-three* pages, the edition of 1609, reprinted in the same volume and same type, fills *ninety-nine* pages. Some of these augmentations, as Mr. Knight says, "are amongst the most masterly passages in the whole play"; but he forgets to add, that there are others which are not much needed, and are hardly worthy to be Shakespeare's *first* thought, much less his *second*. And even the more imaginative and exquisite lines which first appear in the later edition are, for the most part, but additions of considerable length to speeches and soliloquies, which, to an impatient copyist hastily taking down the words from the player's recital, might appear tedious and unnecessary for the full development of the plot or distinct portraiture of the characters. Thus, the long speech of the Friar in the opening scene of the fourth act is expanded from *thirteen* lines in the first publication to *thirty-three* in the edition of 1609. It is far more likely that the copyist omitted the twenty lines in the former case, than that Shakespeare added them in the latter, as they are not wanted for the business of the plot, and are rather an impediment if the drama be considered as an *acting* one. Juliet's soliloquy in the third scene of the same act was retrenched in a similar manner by the copyist for the first edition in quarto, after he had given all the necessary points in it to enable the reader to understand the progress of the incidents. Shakespeare did not rewrite his plays for the mere purpose of eking out long speeches with poetical tail-pieces. Passionate and wildly fanciful as the lines are, which were first printed in the later quarto, they are but the natural—the inevitable—completion of Juliet's thought as the mighty master conceived it.

Hamlet was first printed in quarto in 1603, and was reprinted in the same form the next year, with the following addition to the title-page:—"Newly imprinted, and *enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.*" Here we have a very distinct assertion that the first quarto was *not* a true and perfect copy, and we know that it does not contain much more than half of the play as it now exists. Even Mr. Knight, therefore, is obliged to confess that it was piratical, and that it may

have been "published in haste from a short-hand copy, taken from the mouths of the players"; though he still adheres to the hypothesis, in this case utterly indefensible, that the Hamlet enacted on the stage in or before 1603, from which this stolen short-hand copy was taken, was not the Hamlet which we now have, but only an immature first draft, — the earliest conception, and comparatively feeble expression, of what was afterwards wrought into a noble drama. In other words, he maintains that the deficiencies of the first quarto are attributable to the piratical copyist in some small degree indeed, but in great part to Shakespeare himself, who had already, and even some years before, written such plays as Henry IV., the Midsummer Night's Dream, King John, and the Merchant of Venice. He confesses that "all the *action* of the amended Hamlet is to be found in the first sketch"; so that Shakespeare rewrote the piece, in this instance as in the former one, merely for the purpose of lengthening out the speeches with poetical imaginings and philosophical aphorisms, leaving the plot and the characters just as they were before. Among the many puerile conceits and baseless suppositions of the commentators on Shakespeare, this hypothesis stands unmatched for absurdity.

We lay it down almost as an axiom, then, that whenever the early quarto editions fail to give, even in a perverted and misprinted condition, *the whole* text as we now possess it, the omissions and deficiencies are attributable solely to "the frauds and stealths of the injurious impostors" who published them. Several of these editions are confessedly complete, or nearly so, being probably derived from full playhouse copies that had been surreptitiously obtained, though the printers sadly marred and defaced them on the published pages. But others are so imperfect, that, if we depended for the text upon them alone, Shakespeare would seem to fall to the level of a second-rate dramatist. The first quarto of Romeo and Juliet, as we have seen, contains only about three fourths of the text; the first Hamlet only about half. The quarto Henry V. contains only about eighteen hundred lines, while the perfect text has thirty-five hundred. Malone justly says, "The quarto copy of this play is manifestly an imperfect transcript pro-

cured by some fraud, and not a first draught or hasty sketch of Shakespeare's. The choruses, which are wanting in it, and which must have been written in 1599, before the quarto was printed, prove this." The folio Othello has one hundred and sixty-three lines that are not in the quarto; and as the quarto of this play was published six years after Shakespeare's death, and only one year before the folio, Mr. Knight is obliged to abandon his hypothesis, and to acknowledge that the earlier edition was piratical and defective. Richard II. in the first quarto is defective by a whole scene, containing one hundred and fifty-four lines; and the Second Part of Henry IV., as printed in the folio, has about one hundred and fifty lines that are not in the quarto. The quarto Lear omits only about fifty lines of the genuine text; but its surreptitious and defective origin is still more clearly indicated by another peculiarity, which we will allow Mr. Knight to describe.

"In the quarto text, the metrical arrangement is one mass of confusion. Speech after speech, and scene after scene, which in the genuine copy of the folio are metrically correct, are, in the quarto, either printed as prose, or the lines are so mixed together, without any apparent knowledge in the editor of the metrical laws by which they were constructed, that it would have been almost impossible, from this text alone, to have reduced them to any thing like the form in which they were written by the author. This circumstance appears to us conclusive, that *these quarto copies could not have been printed from the author's manuscript.*"

Summing up the whole matter, then, we may ask, What would be the state of Shakespeare's text, if we were obliged to depend solely upon the editions that were published in his lifetime? In the first place, twenty of his plays, many of which are among the noblest of his efforts, would be lost to us altogether. For the text of *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Winter's Tale*, *King John*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*, and eleven others, we are dependent *solely* on the folio of 1623. In the second place, the sixteen plays that were printed while their author was yet living are all piratical copies, obtained by stealth and by expedients obviously so incompetent to furnish an accurate copy, that hardly a line in them can safely be pro-



nounced to exist just as Shakespeare wrote it, except upon internal evidence, or from its agreement with the copy of the same play which is found in the folio.

The next question that arises is, How perfect is the text of the plays in the folio of 1623? It is comparatively little to say, that Heminge and Condell, the editors of that volume, seem to have limited their efforts to merely supplying the printers with material for play-house manuscript copies, such as they then were, of all the dramas, and not to have troubled themselves at all about the correction of the press. Glaring typographical blunders abound in it; verse is printed as prose, and prose as verse; the punctuation throughout seems to have been made at haphazard; words are omitted, mistaken, and transposed, and sometimes the types appear to have been jumbled together into what bears hardly the semblance of a word. A more important consideration is the state of the manuscripts which were furnished to the printers. In 1612, Shakespeare ceased writing, gave up all connection with the theatre, and, of course, with his plays, and retired from London; and in 1616 he died. It follows, that all the twenty plays which were first printed in the folio had existed in manuscript, without being seen by their author for at least eleven years, and some of them for a much longer period. The *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, for instance, was probably written about 1592, and had therefore existed only in written copies for thirty-two years; *Measure for Measure* and the *Comedy of Errors* had thus existed for over twenty years. The Globe Theatre was burnt down in 1613, and it is more than probable that all of Shakespeare's original manuscripts which had survived to that period were then destroyed. The written copies were multiplied by careless transcribers for the use of the different performers, sometimes the whole being copied out, at other times only the part of one of the personages in the drama. The prompter's books were probably complete, while those used by individual actors were more or less defective. Alterations and omissions were made from time to time, to adapt the performance to the varying exigencies of the theatre or the altered taste of the times. We have a slight but curious indication of the improved mo-

rality of the English populace, consequent upon the diffusion of Puritanic feelings and opinions under James I., in the fact, that not a few of the expressions in the play of Henry IV., as they appear in the quartos, and which were thought profane, especially some of the ejaculations of Falstaff, were in the folio softened or expunged. Such expurgations, as they do not affect either the wit or the sense, are not to be regretted. But there were others which are more serious.

To shorten the performance, portions of long speeches, and even parts of the dialogue, were marked to be omitted by the actors in recitation; and when new copies came to be made, to replace those which had been lost or worn out, the copyist omitted to transcribe what had ceased to be acted. We have said that *Lear* in the folio contains about fifty lines that are not in the quarto; and we must now add, that the quarto has about two hundred and twenty-five lines, which are indisputably Shakespeare's, that are not in the folio. The omissions were probably made to shorten the performance, as, without them, *Lear* is the longest of the author's plays except *Hamlet*. The passages that were struck out are chiefly descriptive, every thing being retained which was necessary to the progress of the action or to the development of character. But among them are some of the most masterly passages in the drama, rich in the inexhaustible wealth of Shakespeare's imagination, and glowing with the fire of passion. Thus, the whole of the third scene of the fourth act, containing "a Gentleman's" inimitable description, given to Kent, of the manner in which Cordelia, in France, received the news of her father's maltreatment by her sisters, is left out in the folio,—perhaps for the very reason that the passage is so beautiful and striking, that it would infallibly have been marred in the delivery by such an actor as was thought competent to play the very inferior part of an anonymous gentleman. And yet that most unhappy editor, Mr. Knight, blindly and stubbornly supporting his hypothesis that the author revised and altered the text of his own dramas, strenuously maintains that the omission of this exquisite scene was Shakespeare's own act,—his only reason being that it is "purely descriptive," and he "cannot avoid believing, that the poet sternly resolved to

let the effect of this wonderful drama entirely depend upon its action"! We should not be surprised to hear that Mr. Knight "cannot avoid believing" in Ferdinand Mendez Pinto and Baron Munchausen.

In Richard II., as it exists in the folio, we do not find about fifty lines that are printed in the quarto. To prove that they were omitted only to shorten the performance, and not because they contained blemishes or were supposed not to be genuine, we need only quote five of them, contained in Richard's speech when he banishes Bolingbroke : —

" And for we think the eagle-winged pride  
Of sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts,  
With rival-hating envy, set you on  
To wake our peace, which in our country's cradle  
Draws the sweet infant breath of gentle sleep "; &c.

The earliest quarto edition of Hamlet, as we have noticed, is a very imperfect one; but the second quarto is comparatively complete, and even contains some two hundred lines which are not found in the folio. Among them is the magnificent passage (in a speech of Horatio, Act I. Scene 1) describing the omens that preceded the assassination of "the mightiest Julius," — a passage very similar to a corresponding one in the play of Julius Cæsar. For example, —

" The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets."

Still more important is the omission of the whole scene that contains the grand soliloquy of Hamlet, beginning, —

" How all occasions do inform against me,  
And spur my dull revenge! "

The only motive for such abridgment must have been the desire to shorten the performance of the very long play.

We need not pursue this collation, having adduced sufficient proof that the folio, though much more trustworthy than the quartos, is far from giving us a text which can be relied upon for fulness and accuracy. Of course, we can trace the omissions of the folio only in those cases (and in them but partially) in which the plays had been previously

published. How many and how important the abridgments are in the twenty plays that were first published in 1623, we cannot even conjecture. But judging from analogy, even from the few instances that have here been mentioned, it is safe to affirm that many of the most exquisite passages that Shakespeare ever wrote are lost to us for ever.

There is but one other point to be noticed in this brief sketch of the condition of the text of our great dramatist. In reference to quite a number of plays, we are left in doubt whether they were written by Shakespeare or somebody else, or how great his share in them is, if any. This doubt exists with respect to five of the plays which are published as his in the folio of 1623, viz. the Three Parts of Henry VI., Titus Andronicus, and Pericles; and there are at least half a dozen other plays, which, save that they are not inserted in Heminge and Condell's edition, have about as good a claim to be considered his as the poorest of these five. In his capacity of playwright to the theatrical company to which he belonged, Shakespeare seems first to have exercised his 'prentice hand in altering and adapting to the purposes of the stage the productions, anonymous for the most part, of other dramatists. Before giving birth to any children of his own brain, he adopted many of the progeny of other people, and sent them forth to the world with a much fairer chance of life and prosperity than they had received from their natural parents. Some he rewrote almost entirely; but even in these, some uncharacteristic defect, some meanness of phrase or poverty of thought, betrays their doubtful origin, and proclaims them base-born. In others, his amending hand is but seldom visible, and the only wonder is why their parentage was ever ascribed to him. Very early in his career, a sour and envious brother dramatist complained bitterly of him as "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers,"—as one of those "puppets that speak from our mouths, those anticks garnished in our feathers"; and who, "being an absolute Johannes *Fac-totum*, is, in his own conceit, the only Shake-scene in a country." The charge of plagiarism that is here insinuated is simply absurd; for Shakespeare gave away his own property, instead of appropriating that of other people. He claimed nothing

in respect to authorship, not even that which was wholly his own. He took up miserable and naked children, who were running parentless and shivering through the streets, and, after feeding and clothing them, sent them away again, without giving them his name, to be fathered by any one who might claim them. And yet, as Mr. Collier remarks, he was the "Johannes Fac-totum" of his theatrical associates. "He was an actor, and he was a writer of original plays, an adapter and improver of those already in existence, (some of them by Greene, Marlowe, Lodge, or Peele,) and no doubt he contributed prologues or epilogues, and inserted scenes, speeches, or passages on any temporary emergency." Because he was so entirely careless about the credit which might accrue from such performances, what he thus wrote has irrecoverably perished. We know not how much the whole dramatic literature of the later part of Elizabeth's reign and the early part of James's owes to Shakespeare. Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher are certainly under heavy obligations to him.

The conclusion that must be drawn from this summary view of the evidence is, that the text of no eminent writer, whether ancient or modern, with perhaps the single exception of Æschylus, has come down to us in so uncertain, defective, and corrupt a condition as that of Shakespeare. The account now given will be found fruitful, if we mistake not, in important inferences respecting the proper criticism and emendation of the text. And it also throws much light on the question which has been so fiercely mooted for the last year or two between Mr. Collier and the other commentators on Shakespeare. Suppose an ancient playhouse copy should be discovered, containing thousands of manuscript emendations, which clear up many of the most obscure and corrupt places in the text, and which can be traced back, by very satisfactory evidence, to a period at least as early as the Revolution of 1688, and perhaps anterior even to the Restoration in 1660. Such a discovery, we might well imagine, would be hailed with great joy by the admirers of Shakespeare all over the civilized world. It may seem strange and almost unaccountable, then, that the professed critics, commentators, and

editors of Shakespeare's text, who now form a numerous and very active class of literary men, both in England and this country, far from welcoming the discovery, should manifest extreme jealousy and irritation, and lend all their efforts towards discrediting the value of the newly found emendations, and impugning the character of him who brought them to light. If a bomb-shell had been fired into the critical camp, it could not have raised a greater commotion than the announcement of the corrections found in a copy of the folio of 1632. The press could not work fast enough to give vent to the indignation of the corps of commentators; "Remarks," "Observations," "Criticisms," "Vindications," &c. were published faster than any one could read or hardly count them. Those who could not find means to send forth a book or a pamphlet had recourse to the periodicals; and the articles upon the subject threatened to give the public a surfeit of Shakespearian literature. The whole hive of critics appear to have swarmed for the sole purpose of stinging Mr. Collier to death. In the Preface to the second edition of his "Notes and Emendations," he remarks, with some pathos:—

"My accidental discovery of the corrected folio of 1632 has, I fear, tended to cool friendships of long standing; and individuals with whom I was formerly acquainted now look upon me as if I had done them some personal injury, which they could not overlook, and yet did not know how to revenge."

This onslaught of the whole body of commentators upon one of their fraternity seems to us not only inconsistent with fairness, but to look too much like an attempt to forestall public opinion, and to bear down reason and testimony by sheer vociferation. If we had the Irishman's disposition to be "any body's customer in a row," we should take up the cudgels stoutly in Mr. Collier's defence, and think we could make out a fair case for him. But we have no taste for controversy, and have an especial dread of a battle among the commentators. Dr. Johnson long ago remarked, that the art of writing notes to Shakespeare is not of difficult attainment. "The work is performed," he said, "first by railing at the stupidity, negligence, ignorance, and asinine tastelessness of the

former editors, and showing, from all that goes before, and all that follows, the inelegance and absurdity of the old reading; then by proposing something which to superficial readers would seem specious, but which the editor rejects with indignation; then by producing the true reading, with a long paraphrase, and concluding with loud acclamations on the discovery, and a sober wish for the advancement and prosperity of genuine criticism." If one would see this remark fully exemplified, let him glance at the several publications in which Messrs. Singer, Dyce, Knight, and Halliwell — all rival editors of Shakespeare — have assailed Mr. Collier's discovery. One important fact these gentlemen seem to have entirely lost sight of, — which is, that the question is not at all personal to Mr. Collier, that the emendations which he has lately published are not *his* emendations, that he has in fact played but a very humble part in the transaction, being only the medium through which they have been given to the public, and that the importance and interest of the communication which he has made are fully attested by this very pother among the commentators, — by the immense pains which the persons who seem to consider the text of Shakespeare as their peculiar property have taken to prove that it was absurd and valueless. Dr. Johnson tells us, that he "always suspected that the reading is right, which requires many words to prove it wrong." If this principle be a sound one, the correctness of the emendations which Mr. Collier has recently discovered and published is unquestionable.

As we do not intend to take any further notice of this discreditable personal controversy, it is but fair to Mr. Collier to say, that he seems to have acted throughout with commendable fairness, discretion, and modesty. He has not put himself forward obtrusively, he has not defended *all* the emendations which he has discovered, and he has shown singular candor in renouncing, without a sigh, on the authority of the anonymous old corrector of the folio of 1632, many of the opinions which he had expressed and strenuously defended in his recent elaborate edition of Shakespeare. He has thus given his assailants an opportunity to triumph over him, — an opportunity which all of them, excepting Mr. Dyce, have

been ungenerous enough to use to the full extent. But they have not been candid enough even to allude to the fact, that the annotated folio of 1632 has, in very many instances, convicted *them* of gross error in their former comments upon the text, and that, if the authority of the old annotator is admitted, their critical reputation will be seriously impaired, and their editions will become almost valueless. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ.* We suppose that Mr. Collier possesses the copyright in England of his newly discovered emendations, and if their genuineness be universally recognized, he will have a monopoly for many years of the only good edition of Shakespeare. This is his good fortune, and he deserves it; for by his previous labors alone, he had contributed more than any other living man to the known facts in Shakespeare's biography, and to the restoration and elucidation of Shakespeare's text.

We propose, in the first place, to give a brief view of the *external evidence* in the case, a point which has not yet received the attention that it deserves. Copies of the old folio editions of Shakespeare, containing manuscript corrections of the text made by some unknown hand, are not rare or difficult to be had. Mr. Singer tells us he possesses two of them; the Earl of Ellesmere has a third; a fourth once belonged to the poet Southerne; and a fifth exists here in Boston, of which some account has been given in a pamphlet that is now before us. Such annotations have not usually been found to be either numerous or valuable. Accordingly, when Mr. Collier became the owner, about five years ago, of a much worn and defaced copy of the folio of 1632, on the cover of which was written "Thomas Perkins, his Booke," he hardly noticed its written marginal corrections, but threw the volume aside as being nearly valueless. After a while, his attention being again accidentally turned towards it, he was struck with the astonishing number and minuteness of the written annotations, and also with sundry plain indications that they had been made by some person connected with the stage, either as actor or manager, apparently for the purpose of creating a very accurate playhouse copy. He then attempted to trace the history of the volume, but at first was wholly unsuccessful in the endeavor. Before the second edition of his book



was printed, however, he obtained some important information, which he details in the Preface.

Mr. Parry came forward and stated that he owned the volume about fifty years ago, and that it had been given to him, towards the close of the last century, by a connection of his family, Mr. George Gray, who was a collector of rare books. Mr. Parry described from memory both the exterior and interior of the book, its missing leaves and innumerable corrections, with such minuteness as to leave no doubt that it was the very copy which has since come into Mr. Collier's hands. It is not certainly known how Mr. Gray obtained it; but Mr. Parry had always understood and believed that he procured it from a place called Ufton Court, a few miles from his own residence, which had long been occupied by a Roman Catholic family of the name of Perkins. This family had been broken up, and their library sold, at the time when Mr. Gray became the purchaser of the volume. The family was of some note and antiquity, one member of it having married Arabella Fermor, the heroine of the *Rape of the Lock*, and another, Francis Perkins, having died at Ufton Court in 1635, only three years after the publication of the folio which has been annotated. There was a distinguished actor on the stage, named Richard Perkins, who is known to have borne a part in the representation of Webster's "*White Devil*," before that drama was published in 1631. He was also in some measure a poet, as he wrote a copy of verses prefixed to Heywood's "*Apology for Actors*." Mention has been found in print of a Richard Perkins, who, at an unknown date, married a Lady Mervin of Ufton Court; and Collier supposes it barely possible, that this was Richard Perkins the actor. This conjecture is rendered improbable, however, by the known fact, that the actor, after the playhouses were shut up by the Long Parliament, lived for some years at Clerkenwell, where he died not long before the Restoration. Still it is not unlikely that he was the manuscript annotator of the volume, and that it passed from him to his relative, Thomas Perkins, whose name is written on the cover, and who transmitted it to the family at Ufton Court. This conjecture seems the more plausible, as the cover on which the name is written does not seem to have

been the original binding of the volume. Thomas Perkins may have prized the volume highly, on account of the marginal corrections made in it by a relative, and may therefore have given it a new binding and written his name upon it.

The character of the handwriting makes this hypothesis extremely probable. Mr. Collier states his belief, that the writing is not much later than the time when the volume came from the press (1632); and we are not aware that this statement has been impugned by any of his assailants among the commentators, some of whom must be very familiar with the chirography of the period in question.\* Indeed, one who has seen many specimens of the handwriting of the founders of New England, from 1630 to 1660, on turning to that in the fac-simile prefixed to Mr. Collier's volume, will be struck with many obvious points of resemblance, such as the form of the long *s*, the peculiar shape of *e*, the prolongation of *h* below the line, &c. Mr. Collier also states very positively his present conviction that the writing throughout the volume is by the same hand, though he was at first inclined to believe, from a difference in the ink employed on different pages, that two or more persons might have written in the volume; and we are inclined to give full credit to his statement, because he has shown such commendable frankness in mentioning several slight circumstances that might create a presumption against the authenticity of the manuscript readings.

But we do not need to press any doubtful circumstance into the argument. It is enough that the chirography and other external evidence prove beyond all question that the marginal corrections were entered at least as early as the publication of the fourth folio, in 1685; other considerations will enable us to carry the date of them still farther back,—to a period antecedent to the issue of the third folio, in 1664. So it is enough to be assured that the emendations were made for theatrical purposes, and by some person connected with the stage, either as actor or manager, whether it were Richard Perkins, or one of his fellows or successors.

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\* Mr. Collier also asserts, that the manuscript notes in its margins were made before the volume was subjected to all the ill usage which has reduced it to its present defaced and dilapidated condition.

“Many passages, in nearly all the plays, are struck out with a pen, as if for the purpose of shortening the performance; and we need not feel much hesitation in coming to the conclusion, that these omissions had reference to the representation of the plays by some company about the date of the folio, 1632. To this fact we may add, that hundreds of stage directions have been inserted in manuscript, as if for the guidance and instruction of actors, in order that no mistake might be made in what is usually denominated stage-business. It is known that in this respect the old printed copies are very deficient; and sometimes, the written additions of this kind seem even more frequent, and more explicit, than might be thought necessary. The erasures of passages and scenes are quite inconsistent with the notion that a new edition of the folio, 1632, was contemplated; and how are they, and the new stage-directions, and ‘asides,’ to be accounted for, excepting on the supposition that the volume once belonged to a person interested in, or connected with, one of our early theatres? The continuation of the corrections and emendations, in spite of and through the erasures, *may* show that they were done at a different time and by a different person; but who shall say which was done first, or whether both were not, in fact, the work of the same hand?” — Collier’s *Notes and Emendations*, pp. xvii., xviii.

In this last sentence, Mr. Collier seems to us to state quite too modestly or doubtfully his conviction, that the erasures and emendations of the erased passages were made by the same hand. The MS. Annotator, as we shall in future call the unknown author of the written emendations of the folio of 1632, appears to have amended the passages, because he had no doubt that they were genuine; at the same time, he crossed them out only to indicate that they were to be omitted in the performance. He did precisely what was done by the players in Shakespeare’s own day, and what no modern editor, critic, or commentator would have thought of doing. We have already proved that many passages of considerable length, amounting to two hundred and fifty lines in a single play, had been struck out from the manuscript copies that were used by Heminge and Condell in editing the first folio edition of Shakespeare,—struck out, not from any doubt whether he wrote them, but only to shorten the time required for performing a long drama. An editor or annotator, who was preparing the copy, not for representation on the stage, but only to

be published and read, in which case the length of a play is of no importance, would never have dreamed of taking such a liberty; and many persons, who have looked at the matter only superficially, have thought that, because the MS. Annotator used such indefensible license with the text, he could not have had warrant or authority for any part of his proceedings. On the contrary, the license thus taken by him affords good evidence in his favor, as it proves that he was an actor at an early day, when such freedom was deemed allowable, and one that relied chiefly upon old playhouse copies, instead of being an editor at a much later period, who relies only upon conjecture, and who may alter a word here or there, though he would never dare to erase a sentence.

Another fact casually mentioned respecting these erasures supports an important inference about their date, which seems to have escaped Mr. Collier's notice. All passages of an indecent or needlessly licentious or profane character are carefully struck out, evincing, says Mr. Collier, "the advance of a better or purer taste about the period when the emendator went over the volume." For instance, the Porter's speech in *Macbeth*, and portions of the dialogue between Hamlet and Ophelia, are erased. Now at what period was the prevailing taste so pure as to authorize, and even require, the omission of such passages? Not surely after the Restoration, when the gross licentiousness of the stage was countenanced by the still grosser licentiousness of the court,—when plays were publicly acted which are now deemed not fit to be read,—and when Dryden and Davenant polluted even Shakespeare by their stupidly obscene alterations of *The Tempest*. Was it not rather in Charles the First's time, when, as we have seen, the diffusion of Puritanism compelled the editors of the first folio to strike out the profane ejaculations of Falstaff, and some minor indecencies, which had been tolerated in the publication of the earlier quartos?

Again, it should be remembered that the Long Parliament, in September, 1642, ordered all the theatres to be closed; (they had previously been shut up nearly a year, beginning in May, 1636, on account of the plague;) and that a more imperative and effectual ordinance was published in 1647, "for

the better suppression of stage-plays, interludes, and common players." Rigid measures were adopted a year afterwards to enforce this act, and we know that it was enforced with great strictness until the eve of the Restoration. Not till 1658 did Davenant venture to occupy the Cockpit, Drury Lane, with a theatrical company; and even then he called his representations *operas*, and did not grow bold enough to cause regular stage-plays to be performed till just before Charles II. landed in England. The theatres, then, were closed, and the actors' vocation was gone, for about sixteen years. It appears extremely probable that one of the principal performers or managers should have sought employment or diversion, during this period of enforced leisure, by correcting what was then the latest complete edition of Shakespeare, using for this purpose his own recollection of some of the leading parts, which he had committed to memory for the performance of them, and also all the now useless stores of the prompter's room, consisting of old manuscripts and marked copies of the quartos and of the first folio. There must have been very many transcripts, either partial or complete, (for the use of a large theatrical company,) of at least twenty of the plays, down to 1623, when the first folio was published; and as this folio was a rather costly volume, instead of buying copies enough of it for the whole troop, it is most likely that they continued to rely, in part at least, on their old manuscripts; and it is by no means extravagant to suppose that a number of these written copies, which either had been in frequent use, or had been laid aside and forgotten, continued in existence for at least twenty years, — that is, down to the time when the theatres were shut up by the Long Parliament. The player, therefore, could have had no lack of materials to work with; and the work which he performed was certainly respectable in amount. Mr. Collier tells us that there are over twenty thousand emendations, and from various signs he concludes that the MS. Annotator must have been engaged several years in making them.

Is there any later period, during which a *player* (for we consider it to be demonstrated that the MS. Annotator was a player) was equally likely to have the requisite leisure,

inclination, and materials for so great an undertaking? Can we find such a period in the reign of Charles II., when theatricals were in greater favor than they ever had been, or ever have been since, — when playhouses were numerous and thronged, — when we may reasonably suppose that all the histrionic talent in the kingdom was developed and in full employment, — but when Shakespeare was so little in repute, that his plays can hardly be said to have kept possession of the stage, except in the form of the tasteless, obscene, and barbarous alterations of them by Dryden, Davenant, and others? The same considerations apply, not indeed with equal, but with great force, against the hypothesis that the emendations were made under James II., William and Mary, or Anne; but we need not here dwell upon this point, for, as we have said, the proof from other sources is complete that they could not have been entered in the margins after 1685, the date of the fourth folio.

Observe, that we have as yet confined our attention entirely to the *external* evidence, and the only point which this evidence has been cited to prove is, that the manuscript annotations in question were made in a copy of what was, when they were made, the *latest* complete edition of Shakespeare; in other words, these annotations were entered before the publication of the third folio, in 1664. And we must avow our conviction, that the evidence cited is sufficient for the point to be proved; for it may be doubted if the age of any undated ancient manuscript, either of the Scriptures or the Latin or Greek classics, is determined within one hundred years upon testimony as conclusive as that which has now been given. From (1.) the ascertained history of the volume, considered in its connection with the Perkins family at Ufton Court; from (2.) the appearance of the chirography, when compared with other specimens of handwriting under Charles I.; from (3.) the nature of the passages marked to be omitted in the performance; and from (4.) the fact that the emendations were made by a player, and that the playhouses were shut up from 1642 to 1658, — we regard it as proved that the MS. Annotator had finished his work in 1664. In what follows, we shall proceed upon the supposition that this point is established.

In treating of the *internal* evidence in favor of the MS. Annotator's emendations, we wish, at first, to use only that portion of it which is conceded (to go for what it is worth) even by his most bitter and resolute assailants,—by those who are well acquainted with the subject, but who, at the same time, have the strongest motives for depreciating the value of Mr. Collier's discovery. Thus even Mr. Singer, who is, beyond all question, the blindest and the most bigoted of the corps of editors and commentators that have attacked the recently discovered corrections, and who is enabled to deny the necessity for many of them only by putting forward, as undoubted readings, some very curious *conjectural* emendations of his own,—even Mr. Singer admits the authenticity of nearly all that portion of the MS. Annotator's labors, in which he has been unconsciously followed by most of the modern commentators, from Theobald downward. He thinks, however, to make this admission only a damaging one for Mr. Collier's cause, by a sneering remark in each case; such as, "This is another of the *undesigned* coincidences," or "This is a happy coincidence again." In other words, he insinuates that Mr. Collier *has committed forgery*; and he sometimes makes the insinuation a very open one, as in the following passage, where the italics are Mr. Singer's own.

"There are two or three more *coincident* corrections in this scene; but as they have been long since admitted into the text, the mention of them would be superfluous, but for the frequent occurrence of such wonderful sympathy between the corrector and those who are supposed to have come after him."—Singer's *Text vindicated*, p. 43.

After the abundant proof now given of the antiquity of the manuscript corrections in Mr. Collier's book, this charge, which fails to be criminal only because it is so prodigiously absurd, may be safely said to be derogatory only to him who made it.

Mr. Singer is so delightfully silly as to assert, in plain language, that the old MS. Annotator has stolen *from him*,—from Mr. Singer, who published an edition of Shakespeare in 1826, and who, according to an advertisement carefully annexed to his present book, is about to issue another edition

of the great dramatist, in which he hopes "to have the gratification of leaving the text of Shakespeare *in a much more satisfactory state* than I found it." But let us consider the alleged case of plagiarism from his former edition. In Love's Labor's Lost, we find, according to the old folios, the following line:—

"So [pertaunt like] would I o'ersway his state."

The critics have been greatly perplexed by the two words which we have inclosed in brackets; and the MS. Annotator tells us, what no reasonable being except a commentator will doubt, that the line should read,—

"So *potently* would I o'ersway his state."

Now for Mr. Singer.

"As I have never seen the corrector's book, I am obliged in self-defence to think it possible that he had seen mine; for in the edition of Shakespeare I gave in 1826, the line stands,—

'So *potent-like* would I o'ersway his state.'

And having no faith in coincidences, when they are so marvellously repeated hundreds of times, I feel constrained to draw this conclusion. Be it observed, however, that *potent-like* is a nearer approach to the old reading than *potently*, and *I cannot but wish the corrector had kept closer to my reading.*" — Singer's *Text vindicated*, p. 24.

Bravo! Mr. Singer. If your proposed new edition of Shakespeare should contain many such words as *potent-like*, it will be a *curious-like* production, and we will certainly buy a copy.

Mr. Dyce is an able and gentlemanly critic, all of whose suggestions are deserving of respect; and though laboring under the strong bias against the value of Mr. Collier's discovery which must affect all who have been, or are to be, editors of Shakespeare, or who have committed themselves by published criticisms upon the text, his concessions are comparatively frank and bountiful. He has reason, indeed, to favor the MS. Annotator, who sanctions several happy criticisms and conjectural emendations contained in his "Remarks on Collier's and Knight's Editions of Shakespeare," published in 1844. "My opinion is," says Mr. Dyce, "that



while [Mr. Collier's volume] abounds with alterations ignorant, tasteless, and wanton, it also occasionally presents corrections which require no authority to recommend them, because common sense declares them to be right."

But of all concessions made by opponents, we prefer to use those of an able critic (*query*, also an editor of Shakespeare?) in *Putnam's Magazine* for October and November last, because he has taken pains to make the expression of his opinion exact by classifying the emendations according to their relative merit, and numbering those in each class. Of the 1,303 modifications of the text by the MS. Annotator which are specified in the *first edition* of Mr. Collier's book, (we are using the *second* edition,) this critic tells us that 249 are what he calls "old";—that is, a few of them may be found in the text of the first folio or the old quartos, but the greater part agree with the conjectural emendations that have been proposed by critics and commentators "during the last hundred and fifty years." Of these 249, he says, 29 have been rejected by previous editors, and he judges that 47 others are "inadmissible but plausible," and the remaining 173 are already admitted and form part of the received text. We have here, then, the exact number of Mr. Singer's "remarkable happy coincidences." As this critic himself, after considerable wavering, places the date of the MS. Annotator's labors "not earlier than about 1670," and says elsewhere "that some of the [MS. corrections] are about a hundred and seventy-five years old there can be no question," while the race of "critics and commentators" certainly did not begin to work till Rowe published his edition in 1709, and did not accomplish much before Theobald's "Shakspeare Restored" appeared in 1726, it follows, that the *MS. Annotator is entitled to the whole credit of the 173 admitted, and the 47 plausible corrections, in the suggestion of which he preceded all other persons by at least a quarter of a century.* Observe further, that it is not merely the anonymous American critic who concedes that this large number of corrections is admissible, but the whole corps of critics and editors who have since adopted them have virtually made the same admission; and at least as much as this may be fairly inferred from the language already quoted from Singer and Dyce.

Again, of the 1,054 modifications of the received text which the critic in *Putnam's Magazine* declares are peculiar to the old MS. Annotator, he admits that 119 are "inadmissible but plausible," and 117 "*seem* to be admissible corrections of passages which need correction";—grudging language, which shows rather the unwillingness of the concession than any doubt as to its justice and propriety. Adding these to the former sums, we have a total of *one hundred and sixty-six plausible, and two hundred and ninety admitted corrections of the text, the sole credit of which is due to the MS. Annotator.* What one editor, critic, or commentator can claim the original suggestion of an equal number of *conjectural* emendations, which even strongly prejudiced rivals and opponents admit as either plausible or unquestionably sound? Theobald, one of the earliest, and certainly the best of the whole corps, who, because he was the happiest in conjecture, was exalted by Pope to his painful preëminence in the Dunciad, and has been regularly abused by every dunce of an editor and commentator since his own day,—Theobald probably cannot claim half as many. In our own times, critics and editors of Shakespeare very seldom aspire to the perilous honor of "conjectural emendations," but confine their labors almost entirely to what they call restoring the old, genuine text, and shovelling away the heap of absurdities which have been accumulated by the guesswork of former commentators, — never failing, however, to pilfer slyly a number of the best guesses from the mass, and to install them quietly in the text. Mr. Dyce, the ablest of their number, has proposed perhaps a score of new readings, most of which do honor to his taste and discernment; Mr. Singer, the feeblest of the set, may have published fifty guesses, of which it can only be said that the best are atrociously bad.

If the truth must be told, antiquarianism and bibliomania have spoiled our latest set of commentators. They seem more bent upon showing the extent of their collection of rare or unique books and pamphlets,—rare or unique because so worthless that no one for two or three centuries has ever thought of republishing them,—and the great compass of their reading in the most obscure and forgotten part of the litera-

ture of the Elizabethan period, than upon correcting or elucidating the text of Shakespeare. A disputed reading is with them only a pretext for a vast display of cumbrous and out-of-the-way erudition. We are sorry to add, that this seemingly harsh remark is especially applicable to Mr. Dyce, whose last published volume, of only 156 pages of large print, contains perhaps three or four hundred citations from at least half as many authors of the sixteenth or the early part of the seventeenth century, whom no one but a zealous antiquarian ever heard of. We open the book at random for an example, and find this line of Shakespeare, —

“Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff,” —

the meaning of which appears too obvious to need any elucidation, *illustrated by thirty-three citations* from such authors or books as the following : — *Tiptoft Earle of Worcester, The Lord Hastings, England's Eliza*, A. Fraunce's *Countess of Pembrokes Yuychurch*, 1591, *A Herrings Tayle*, 1598, Barnes's *Dive's Charter*, 1607, Armin's *Valiant Welshman*, 1615, Hubert's *Edward the Second*, 1629, *Fuimus Troes*, 1633, &c., &c. And the point to be proved by this barrow-load of stupid quotations is, that the writers of Shakespeare's time sometimes indulged in such an iteration or jingle of words as “*stuffed bosom*” and “*perilous stuff*,” in the line which forms the text, — a point which might be fully and easily made out from Shakespeare himself. We do not forget that the world is indebted to antiquarianism for a very few needed illustrations of a few obscure expressions in our great dramatist. But the thing is carried altogether too far. Any tasteful student of Shakespeare will exclaim, Give me a bushel of those much abused conjectures, generally rash but sometimes striking and happy, of Theobald, Warburton, Hanmer, and others, rather than a cart-load of this conceited and fantastical learning. The best and most justifiable display of it, Farmer's “*Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare*,” with all its wit and curious erudition, always seemed to us to *prove* little or nothing except the writer's misplaced industry.

But to return from this digression. Our readers have probably anticipated the only remaining point in our argument,

though it is the one that constitutes the strength of the case in favor of the old MS. Annotator. This indefatigable corrector,—whose very name has perished, and whose manuscript labors, two centuries after his death, were picked up at a bookstall for thirty shillings,—but who, by the confession even of his jealous rivals and opponents, has distanced all competition in the race of *conjectural* emendation, and who has restored the true text of Shakespeare in hundreds of instances, while the best of his imitators was painfully amending a score of lines,—this miracle of critical ingenuity was *a poor player, who lived in an age (the first half of the seventeenth century) when conjectural emendation of an English author was an art as yet unheard of, and when the writings of our great dramatist were so little known or prized, that four rude and uncritical editions of them sufficed for a century.* In Charles the First's time, or under the Commonwealth, a Theobald would have been a miracle, and even a Singer would have seemed a curiosity. We can more easily imagine another Shakespeare to have arisen about 1640, than an amender of Shakespeare's text by guesswork; for the race of playwrights was then still in being, though that of critics and commentators was as yet unborn. The folio of 1632 was a mere reprint of that of 1623, and it added more errors of the press than it corrected. The edition of 1664 bears no marks of an editor's care, except the insertion of half a dozen apocryphal dramas; and that of 1685 is as carelessly printed as its predecessors. "Neither of the two latter folios is of the slightest authority in determining the text of Shakespeare." In urging this argument, we do not need to place any great stress upon the value or genuineness of the MS. Annotator's corrections, but only upon their extraordinary number and minuteness. In that uncritical age, that a person should have been willing to give the labor of several years to making twenty thousand alterations of Shakespeare's text *by mere conjecture*, is a story that outrages all the laws of probability. And when we add, that hundreds of these alterations are found equal or superior in merit to the best that have been produced by the taste, learning, and critical acumen of the next two centuries, the tale becomes absolutely incredible.

There is but one way of explaining the mystery. The old Annotator was no critic, no ingenious contriver of new readings, but simply a scribe, who worked from the materials in his possession as blindly as the compositor in a printing-office follows "the copy," whether that copy be sense or nonsense. He was, as we have suggested, a player out of employment, who sought to amuse his forced leisure by forming, from his own recollection of the plays in which he had often been an actor, and from the old manuscripts in the prompter's room, a text which should be more correct than the two wretchedly printed folios, and which, by its numerous stage-directions and passages noted to be left out in the performance, should be a trustworthy and available guide when the playhouses should be opened again. He proceeds like a proof-reader, not like a commentator; that is, he simply enters the correction in the margin, without adding a word of his own, by way of explanation, defence, or criticism. Commentators are not wont to be so concise. He often passes over obscure and corrupt passages, not having wherewithal to amend them; and still oftener makes an admirable emendation of a line, which, in later times, no one even suspected of corruption. Sometimes he makes an explanation unconsciously, as when, intending only to enter a stage-direction, he pours daylight over something in the text, around which all subsequent editors have groped in darkness. We need only allude to his famous stage-direction in the *Tempest*, which shows the cause of that sudden somnolency of Miranda which has so often perplexed the reader. A modern emendator would surely have paused to clap his hands and glorify himself on such a discovery. The MS. Annotator is evidently unconscious that there is any difficulty to be overcome; for always having seen the play rightly performed in this respect, every point appeared to him obvious and natural.

But the decisive consideration to prove that the MS. Annotator worked from authority, and not from conjecture, is, that he supplies omissions and makes corrections, which, as every reader of common sense can see, lie wholly beyond the reach of conjectural emendation. Here we must adduce in-

stances, and we approach this part of our task with unfeigned diffidence and reluctance. The maxim, *Quot homines, tot sententiae*, is nowhere so applicable as to proposed emendations of the text of Shakespeare. It is notorious that no two critics can be found to agree in opinion as to the merits or genuineness of any half-dozen proposed new readings. One is amused to find this remark so strikingly exemplified as it is among the several assailants of the MS. Annotator. Mr. Dyce affirms that to be certainly right which Mr. Singer says is undeniably wrong; and the critic in *Putnam's Magazine* adopts what both declare to be inadmissible. We are sorry not to be able to follow even Mr. Collier's lead in this matter; for we deem his selection of the best and least questionable emendations of the old Annotator often eminently unfortunate; and his argument in defence of those which may admit of doubt is frequently a lame one, and rather weakens his cause. Our own selection, in the judgment of many, may be doubly censurable; but when several instances are adduced, though one or two be condemned, the general verdict may be trusted as to the collective force of those which remain, so as to substantiate our conclusion that *all* of them *could not* have been framed by mere conjecture.

1. In the Winter's Tale, when Paulina "offers to draw the curtain," as a stage-direction of the MS. Annotator informs us, before the supposed statue of Hermione, Leontes exclaims, —

" Let be ! let be !

Would I were dead, but that, methinks, already

*I am but dead, stone looking upon stone.*

What was he, that did make it ? "

The whole line which we have italicized is supplied by the MS. Annotator, the passage having been printed in all editions without it. Before the discovery of his corrected copy of the folio of 1632, several editors had perceived that the sense was imperfect, and had placed a printer's *dash* after "already," at the end of the second line, as if Leontes in his ecstasy had left his sentence unfinished. The line now supplied seems to us so obviously Shakespearian in its turn of thought and expression, and tallies so precisely with the re-

mainder of the speech, that it would almost argue insanity to doubt its genuineness. Mr. Dyce says, "On first reading the new line, it appeared to me so exactly *in the style of Shakespeare*, that, like Mr. Collier, I felt 'thankful that it had been furnished.' But presently I found that it was *too Shakespearian*." His reason for thinking so is, that Leontes, only a few speeches before, has exclaimed,—

"I am ashamed: does not the stone rebuke me,  
For being more stone than it?"

Standing like stone with thee!"

Mr. Dyce concludes, as he thinks Shakespeare never repeats himself, "that a reviser of the play, with an eye to the passage just cited, *ingeniously* constructed the said line to fill up a supposed lacuna." With all submission, we must prefer Mr. Dyce's *first* thought to his second; for in all our acquaintance with critics and commentators, we have not yet found one who appears "ingenious" enough, with so slender a clew, to invent so Shakespearian a line as the one here given by the MS. Annotator. Whatever may be said of the similarity in the thought, the similarity in the expression is confined to the one word *stone*; and as this is thrice repeated in the single speech cited by Mr. Dyce, we are not surprised to find, several speeches afterwards, that it is repeated twice more, this striking addition being also made to the thought, "*stone looking upon stone*." Let him who doubts the genuineness of this addition to the received text, invent an equally good one. Fortunately we are enabled to judge, as one of them has actually made the experiment. Mr. Singer says, "If a line were wanting, and that is more than doubtful, *a much better one* has been suggested:—

"But that, methinks, already  
*I am in heaven, and looking on an angel.*"

O Mr. Singer!

2. In the Second Part of Henry IV., Lord Bardolph draws a parallel between the building of a house and the carrying on of a war, and takes the case of a man attempting to build, and finding out by woful experience that he has not counted

the cost. In this case, as in every other, we italicize what is supplied in writing by the MS. Annotator, and include in angular brackets that portion of the received text which he has struck out. Read the passage, omitting all that is in italics, and you have the received text; read it again, omitting all that is in brackets, and you have the speech as amended by the MS. Annotator.

“What do we then, but draw anew the model  
 In fewer offices; or at [least] *last* desist  
 To build at all? Much more, in this great work,  
 (Which is, almost, to pluck a kingdom down,  
 And set another up,) should we survey  
 The plot [of], *the* situation, and the model;  
 [Consent] *Consult* upon a sure foundation;  
 Question surveyors; know our own estate,  
 How able such a work to undergo.  
*A careful leader sums what force he brings*  
 To weigh against his opposite; or else  
 We fortify [in] *on* paper, and in figures,” &c.

We say nothing of the minor verbal emendations of this passage, though without them a portion of it is unintelligible, and with them the meaning is clear and consistent. But the whole line which is supplied by the MS. Annotator is so obviously necessary to make out the sense (the words, “To weigh against *his* opposite,” having otherwise nothing to correspond to them, and “his” no antecedent), and is so clearly in the manner of Shakespeare, that we have not the slightest doubt that it came from his pen.

Neither Mr. Dyce nor Mr. Singer says one word about this emendation, and considering its irresistible claims, their silence does not appear very ingenuous. The critic in *Putnam's Magazine* also passes it over without direct notice, having previously made up his mind against the whole class of emendations to which it belongs,—those, namely, in which entire lines are supplied to complete a deficient sense. “No matter,” he says, “how great the deficiency which they attempt to supply, or how remarkable their intrinsic merits”; they must be rejected, because “they are not emendations of typographical blunders, not the correction of that which is ill done,



but the doing of that which was left undone"; and he adds, very rightly, that "the interpolation of an entire line by one man is as little justifiable as the interpolation of an entire scene by another."\* Here the critic has in view the very consideration on which our present argument is based, though he makes a most illogical use of it. He sees clearly, as every one must do, that *entire lines cannot be supplied by conjecture*; and having previously made up his mind that the MS. Annotator had nothing but conjecture to depend upon, he decides that the supplied lines must be rejected, *however great the internal evidence in their favor*. But we argue thus:—The internal evidence that the two entire lines supplied by the MS. Annotator could not have been written by a commentator, is irresistible; we grant that they could not have been supplied by conjecture; therefore we have conclusive proof that the MS. Annotator could not have supplied them by conjecture, but must have worked with an authority before him.

3. We have not yet done with the entire lines supplied by the MS. Annotator. Witness the following, which is added to a speech of Sir Eglamour, in the fourth act of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*:—

"Madam, I pity much your grievances,  
And the most true affections that you bear,  
Which since I know they virtuously are placed,  
I give consent to go along with you."

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\* The reason given by this critic for affirming "that the corrections in Mr. Collier's folio could not possibly have been made before 1662, when Davenant introduced the first scenery ever exhibited upon a public stage in England," is very curious. According to the stage directions of the MS. Annotator for *Love's Labor's Lost*, Biron "gets him in a tree," and makes some remarks while "in the tree." The critic argues that such stage directions could not have been put forth before Davenant's stage improvement was made. Why not argue, also, that the whole first scene of *The Tempest* is spurious, because it is supposed to take place on board a ship? or that many scenes in *As You Like It* ought to be rejected, because they take place amid a whole forest of trees? It is evident that Biron is directed to speak "in a tree," just as Juliet makes love in "a balcony,"—not that either the tree or the balcony was real, or even a good imitation of the reality; but the actor was perched on a stand a few feet above the stage, with a partial covering in front, and the spectators' imaginations did the rest. We may remark, in passing, that the stage direction just cited, "*He gets him in a tree*," is a phrase that we should not expect to find after the Restoration, and from a modern fashioner of conjectural readings, it would be simply ludicrous. The phrase is Elizabethan, or certainly not later than Charles I.

Omit the line in italics, and Sir Eglamour is made to say, that, as he knows Silvia's "*grievances*" "virtuously are placed," he consents to go along with her to Mantua, — which is nonsense. The line supplied furnishes just the meaning that is needed, and tallies perfectly with Silvia's preceding speech; and though it is not so obviously Shakespearian in its turn as the two previously cited, it is far above the power of any modern commentator to forge, and we therefore incorporate it without hesitation into the mighty master's text.

4. Again, in the third act of *Coriolanus*, Volumnia says,

"Pray be counselled :

I have a heart as little apt as yours  
*To brook control without the use of anger ;*  
 But yet a brain, that leads my use of anger  
 To better vantage."

Without the line in italics, the sense is evidently incomplete, as there is nothing to which Volumnia's heart is "little apt"; and we can plainly see how, in the careless printing of the first folio, the line was accidentally omitted. The next line also ending with the same words, "use of anger," the printer's eye was caught by them, and he did not observe that they were repeated. The omission was supplied by the MS. Annotator, and who can believe that he, or any other man, was capable of forging such a line?

5. Lines in prose, as well as in verse, are sometimes omitted in the first folio. Thus, in the second act of *The Twelfth Night*, a speech of Sir Andrew Aguecheek and the Clown's reply are printed as follows, the two lines just filling up the breadth of one of the two columns that constitute the folio page:—

"*An.* There's a testrill of me too; if one knight give a

"*Cl.* Would you have a love song, or a song of good life?"

Here it is palpable that, by a printer's blunder, a portion of Sir Andrew's remark has dropped out. The MS. Annotator thus supplies the omission:—

"*Sir Toby.* Come on; there is sixpence for you; let's have a song.

"*Sir An.* There is a testrill of me too: if one knight give away sixpence, so will I give another: go to, a song.

"*Clown.* Would you have a love song or a song of good life?"

He who was capable of inventing the words in italics, so perfectly in keeping with Sir Andrew's character and manner, might have written without effort the whole comic portion of *The Twelfth Night*. In mercy to Mr. Singer, we forbear to quote his comment, and the way in which *he* proposes to fill up the gap.

6. As a specimen of the careless way in which the first folio was printed, we will now give a passage from *All's Well* that ends *Well* (Act I. Scene 3), precisely as it stands in that important volume.

"*Clo.* Was this faire face the cause, quoth she,  
Why the Grecians sacked *Troy*,  
Fond done, done, fond was this King *Priams* ioy,  
With that she sighed as she stood, *bis*  
And gaue this sentence then, among nine bad if one be  
good, among nine bad if one be good, there's yet one  
good in ten

"*Cou.* What, one good in tenne? you corrupt the song  
sirra.

"*Clo.* One good woman in ten Madam, which is a purifying ath' song: would God would serue the world so all the yeere, weed find no fault with the tithe woman if I were the Parson, one in ten quoth a? and wee might haue a good woman borne but ore euerie blazing starre, or at an earthquake, 'twould mend the Latteriewell," &c.

We will now print the extract as the lines are arranged by the modern editors, and with the alterations and additions of the MS. Annotator in italics.

"*Clo.* Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,  
Why the Grecians sacked *Troy*?  
Fond done, done fond, *good sooth it was* ;  
Was this King *Priam's* joy?  
With that she sighed as she stood,  
With that she sighed as she stood,  
And gave this sentence then ;  
Among nine bad if one be good,  
Among nine bad if one be good,  
There's yet one good in ten.

"*Count.* What, one good in ten? you corrupt the song, sirrah.

"*Clo.* One good woman in ten, madam ; which is a purifying o' the song, and mending o' the sex. Would God would serve the world so all the year ! we'd find no fault with the tithe-woman, if I were the parson. One in ten, quotha ! An we might have a good woman born — but *one* — every blazing star, or at an earthquake, 't would mend the lottery well," &c.

The MS. Annotator certainly did not correct this passage and fill up the gaps in it *by conjecture*, though he might have done it by inspiration, or on the authority of a manuscript.

7. In *Much Ado about Nothing* (Act II., Scene 1), Beatrice compares "wooning, wedding, and repenting" to "a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque pace," thus:—

"The first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly, modest, as a measure full of state and ancientry ; and then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinque pace faster and faster, 'till he sink *a pace* into his grave."

Without the words in italics, no one would have supposed that the passage needed any emendation ; but the MS. Annotator supplies them, and thus preserves a pun, very much in Shakespeare's manner, in which consists all the drollery of the latter part of the description.

8. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act II., Scene 1), the Host exclaims, at the end of a short speech, according to the first folio, "Will you go, An-heires ?" The types were evidently jumbled together here, into one of those inexplicable compounds which are sometimes found, as all correctors of the press will testify, on the *first proofs* at a printing-office ; and all the commentators have been greatly puzzled to know what "An-heires" means. "Warburton suggested '*heris*, the old Scotch word for master' ; Steevens, *hearts* ; Malone, *hear us* ; Boaden, *cavaliers*, &c." The MS. Annotator tells us to read, "Will you go *on, here* ?" The Host, being in a hurry, exhorts them again, just afterwards, "Here, boys, here, here ! shall we wag ?" Yet Mr. Dyce is dissatisfied with this simple and satisfactory emendation, and, in his usual manner, on the strength of an expression found in an old play printed in 1647, wishes us to read, "Will you go on,

*Mynheers?*” This is almost as bad as Mr. Singer’s conjectures. We have quoted it only to show how completely the best critics are at fault, when they have nothing but internal evidence to depend upon, in the case of a passage that is obviously corrupt.

We have not space for more instances, and more are not needed, though we could select from Mr. Collier’s volume at least one hundred emendations, that have nearly as good a claim to a place in the text (judging from internal evidence alone) as the eight here mentioned. Individual readers might object to two or three out of the number; but that *the whole eight should have been invented, or made up by mere conjecture, by a poor player in the earlier part of the seventeenth century*, is a supposition so extravagant and incredible, that it cannot be entertained for a moment. As the examples given are taken from eight different plays, the proof seems to be conclusive that the MS. Annotator possessed authoritative materials for the emendation of a correspondingly large portion of Shakespeare’s text; and by enlarging the selection of instances, the same argument might be made to apply, with nearly equal force, to at least four fifths of the plays that are included in the second folio. The Annotator must have had some means, beyond his own ingenuity, for amending at least thirty of the plays; though it does not follow that his means were adequate to the *entire* correction of any one. Probably he had imperfect manuscripts, — transcripts of one or more of the sets of speeches to be spoken by each performer at the representation of one of the dramas. And these manuscripts themselves, having been copied and recopied many times, must have contained many errors of transcription, and probably, also, some alterations designedly made by the performers for various purposes; as we know that they softened Falstaff’s profane ejaculations. We can thus account for a number of obviously corrupt passages, of which the MS. Annotator takes no notice, and also for certain alterations proposed by him that are manifestly indefensible. His authority, at the best, is no higher than that of the first folio, which we know to have been printed in great part from playhouse manuscripts; though the internal evidence

shows that he made a far more careful use of his manuscripts than the printers of that folio did of theirs. But his authority, though not superior, and perhaps not equal, to that of the first complete edition in print, *is still an authority of the same class*. He gives us (to adopt a principle of classification which Griesbach has made familiar in reference to the manuscripts of the New Testament) a new *recension* of the text, made from manuscripts of equal antiquity with those used in printing the first folio, though probably not so complete,—that is, not covering an equally large portion of the text. This conclusion is again rendered extremely probable by the fact, that, in several instances, the reading adopted by the MS. Annotator coincides with that of the old quartos, while it differs from that of the first folio.

The conclusion of the whole matter, according to the view here taken of it, is, that the text for future editions of Shakespeare should be made up from collation of the three leading authorities,—the old quartos, the first folio, and the corrections of the MS. Annotator,—not omitting any entire line found in either of them (as nothing, which probably came from Shakespeare's own hand, should be lost); and where the three vary, the choice between them must be decided by internal evidence alone. These three, and these three only, are authoritative sources of the text; all else depends on mere taste and conjecture.

The principle thus stated enables us to obviate at once the only objection of any importance that has been made to the readings of the MS. Annotator. It is objected that many of these readings are obviously inadmissible, and (so far as internal evidence can prove any thing) cannot have formed part of Shakespeare's own text. We admit it; but we must remind the objectors, that *precisely the same thing can be said of the first folio*. Hundreds, perhaps we might say thousands, of readings in that edition are now rejected by almost unanimous consent, the passages containing them being obviously corrupt. The folio also omits a great number of entire lines, (we have pointed out four or five plays in which about six hundred are left out,) which are indisputably genuine. This objection, consequently, to the labors of the

MS. Annotator, falls entirely to the ground; it is of no weight whatever.

It may be said, however, that the number of inadmissible readings proposed by him bears so large a proportion to those which may be allowed to be correct, as to discredit his whole performance. If we were compelled to accept, for instance, the computation made by the critic in *Putnam's Magazine*, and allow, that, out of one thousand three hundred and three proposed modifications of the text, only two hundred and ninety are good, and one hundred and sixty-six more are plausible, there would be some force in this argument. But this critic, as well as all the English assailants of the newly discovered corrections, proceeds upon the assumption that the MS. Annotator worked by conjecture alone, without any authority whatever; and this assumption being now turned the other way, the internal evidence assumes an entirely new aspect. Thus, to borrow the instance selected by Mr. Collier, if the old reading (with which all minds had become familiar) of Lady Macbeth's appalling invocation, had been as follows:—

“Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the *blankness* of the dark,  
To cry, ‘Hold, Hold!’” —

what would be said of any critic who should advise us to substitute *blanket* instead of *blankness*? He would certainly be placed, on the scale of conjectural emendations, lower even than Mr. Singer. Let all the corrections proposed in Mr. Collier's volume be tried in this manner;—that is, suppose that they constitute the old and received text, and let what are now the old readings be regarded as conjectural emendations, and we doubt not that the general voice would pronounce in favor of at least five sixths of the corrections now recently brought to light. The corps of critics, commentators, and editors would probably do battle in favor of the whole of them. But this mode of trial, as Mr. Collier very candidly admits, would not be a fair one, the prejudice in favor of the old reading being strong enough to outweigh almost any amount of internal evidence. The only method of weighing

the two sets of readings fairly against each other, on their intrinsic merits alone, would be to adopt the principle which we have now laid down, and to suppose that they are of *equal* external authority; to suppose, for example, that they were both first published in the same year, from two equal and independent sets of manuscripts. Tested in this manner, it is very safe to say that at least a majority of the MS. Annotator's readings would be preferred.

"It cannot be surprising," says Mr. Collier, "that individuals who for many years have been accustomed to see passages, even such as are avowedly corrupt, repeated in every edition, and to hear them recited by the best performers of our own or other days, should at first feel repugnance to proposed alterations, however excellent." It should be noted, also, that this prepossession attaches itself most strongly to those expressions which are salient on account of their rarity, their obscurity, or their doubtful construction, and which, for this very reason, are most likely to be corrupt. These are peculiarities in the text, — marked passages, as it were, which have attracted the attention and exercised the ingenuity of all loving readers of the great dramatist, each one of whom has probably selected for them a pet explanation of his own, and they have thus naturally come to be regarded as peculiarly Shakespearian. Weighty and palpable must be the evidence that would displace them. Thus, when Othello exclaims,

"Put out the light, and then put out the light";

when Macbeth soliloquizes,

"If 't were done, when 't is done, then 't were well  
It were done quickly";

when Gadshill describes those who are about to rob on the highway with him as "burgomasters and great *oneyers*"; when Dogberry speaks of himself as "a fellow that hath had *losses*," — the expressions have become consecrated, as it were, in the mind of every loving admirer of Shakespeare, and he will resist to the death any change in them. A similar feeling (it would be too harsh to call it a *prejudice*) exists with regard to many expressions in the common English version of the Scriptures, which might be profitably amend-



ed, as they are either ungrammatical, incorrect, or obsolete, if the change did not disturb in the minds of millions associations which ought to be held sacred. It would be unquestionably more correct to say, "Our Father *who* art," than "Our Father *which* art"; and when we read, "Jesus *prevented* him, saying," we know that the expression in this sense is obsolete, and may even convey a wrong idea to common readers. Yet what person of taste and devotion would like to hear these expressions altered in reading from the pulpit? We need not show how this feeling has operated to prevent the emendations of the MS. Annotator from being fairly weighed on their intrinsic merits. We respect the feeling itself, as it springs from an amiable and honorable source. But it should not blind our eyes to the weight of testimony.

The most common mode of attacking Mr. Collier's volume has been to select the weakest and least defensible emendations, or those which most strongly counteract the prepossession just described, and then to appeal vehemently to the common feeling of reverence for Shakespeare, which should guard *his* text from tasteless *conjectural* alterations. In the first place, this reasoning is unfair. Let the best conjectural emendator — let Theobald himself — be tried by the test of the poorest and least probable changes that he has proposed, and his reputation as a critic would instantly disappear. Secondly, the reasoning contains a gross *petitio principii*; it takes for granted the two chief points at issue, namely, that the first folio, in the case of the very words in question, does contain *the* text of Shakespeare, and that the corrections of the MS. Annotator are mere guesswork. This gross fallacy, as we have seen, is the sole reason assigned by the New York critic for not even taking into consideration those cases in which the MS. Annotator professes to have restored an entire line to the text.

The most common complaint against these emendations is, that they often clear up obscurity at the expense of reducing a poetical expression to a prosaic one, and frequently restore rhythm and metre to lines which, in the received text, were glaringly deficient in one or both. Now certain assumptions form the groundwork of this complaint, which we are by no means inclined to admit. We deny that Shakespeare is gen-

erally, or even frequently, an obscure writer, or that he is a lawless versifier. The obscurity of a passage, we hold, is at least *primâ facie* evidence that it is corrupt. On this point, we are sorry to be obliged to differ from so able and judicious a critic as Mr. Hallam.

"It is impossible to deny," he says, "that innumerable lines in Shakespeare were not more intelligible in his time than they are at present. Much of this may be forgiven, or rather is so incorporated with the strength of his reason and fancy that we love it as the proper body of Shakespeare's soul. Still can we justify the very numerous passages which yield to no interpretation, knots which are never unloosed, which conjecture does but cut, or even those which, if they may at last be understood, keep the attention in perplexity till the first emotion has passed away? . . . We learn Shakespeare, in fact, as we learn a language, or as we read a difficult passage in Greek, with the eye glancing on the commentary; and it is only after much study that we come to forget a part, it can be but a part, of the perplexities he has caused us." — *Literature of Europe*, Vol. III. p. 92.

With all submission, we think that this criticism was written without that careful study of the history of the text, which discloses the astonishing extent, and the causes, of its corruption. An obscure writer is habitually and continually obscure, the defect arising from some peculiarity in his habits of thought, or from his imperfect capacity of expression. But Shakespeare is obscure only by fits and starts. Take some of his plays the text of which is least imperfect, such as *Richard II.*, *Romeo and Juliet*, or *King John*, and we may read scene after scene without finding a sentence which would present a difficulty to a child's understanding. Then suddenly comes a passage, most frequently a single sentence, which is as dark as Erebus. Take the long passages which are most frequently quoted and recited,—the affecting scene between Prince Arthur and Herbert, the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius, the long speeches in *Julius Cæsar*, several of the soliloquies in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*,—and omit perhaps half a dozen lines in each, and the rest is as lucid as a child's story-book. All experience goes to show, when we know the circumstances of the case, that the lack of perspicuity is a persistent and inbred characteristic of style, that constantly

betrays itself. An obscure writer is obscure upon system, as it were, never being perspicuous but by accident. Just the reverse is true of Shakespeare.

Again, an incomplete command of language is the most frequent cause of a labored and perplexed style. But among all the characteristics of the great dramatist, we know hardly of one so marvellous as his absolute mastery of expression. Language is his tricky spirit, as Ariel was to Prospero, and does his "strong bidding" gently,

"be 't to fly,  
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride  
On the curled clouds."

For any purpose, he can "task Ariel and all his quality." Shakespeare wrote for the populace, and it was his business to make himself intelligible to the populace. And this he accomplishes without effort, without painfully ransacking the vocabulary, or mutilating the thought in its expression. The plainest and most familiar terms, the short and pithy Anglo-Saxon phrases in which common men talk on common occasions, serve to exhibit all the riches of his imagination and the depths of his philosophy. With the ordinary coin of the market-place, he pays the ransom of kings. Take the most thoughtful and imaginative musings,—the remonstrance of Isabella to Angelo against the abuse of power, Portia's eulogy on mercy, Hamlet's soliloquy on suicide, Lear's ravings on the injustice of this world, Claudio's ecstasy of fright at the near prospect of death, and a thousand others,—dissect the language (if you can have the heart to do it), and note the homeliness of the words and phrases, when they are taken singly. At times, again, Shakespeare seems to play with language; he runs in sport over the whole gamut of expression, but with the assured touch of a master hand sweeping the keys. Hamlet, who has just been using the vocabulary of the street and the gutter, begins to tell the bewildered Rosencrantz and Guildenstern,—

"Indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a steril promontory; *this most excellent canopy, the air*, — look you! — *this brave o'erhanging firmament, this*

*majestical roof fretted with golden fire*, why, it appears no other thing to me than *a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors*."

Macbeth says his hand, never to be cleansed from blood, will rather

"The multitudinous seas incarnardine,  
Making the green one red."

It would be a miracle if such a writer were obscure. His page has been begrimed and covered with dark spots, only through the rough handling it has received.

It may well be, that the restoration of the true text, though it dissipates the obscurity of a passage, will seem to lessen its poetical effect, as darkness is one source of the sublime. Even this result is not much to be deplored. Shakespeare will not lose much, if only that portion of his poetry is taken away in which we can with difficulty spell out a meaning. Critics of the German school have used a great deal of cant on this subject, as if there were an esoteric significance in many expressions, not to be deciphered by people of common understanding. They forget that the mighty master belonged himself to the people, and wrote for the people. It would almost seem as if they prized the sense of any passage only in proportion to the difficulty of getting at it. In many lines, which are simply corrupt, they have, after their stupidly profound fashion, discovered a world of meaning. According to their apprehensions, Shakespeare is like Hudibras, who

"could not ope  
His mouth, but out there flew a trope."

However misplaced or senseless the expression may seem to ordinary readers, they can discover some remote analogy in it, some glimpse of a hidden truth, or some erratic flight of the imagination, to which they cling with all the more earnestness, as it is not visible to eyes profane. Then comes the MS. Annotator, and, by restoring a letter which had dropt out, or altering the collocation of a word or two, reduces the passage to plain narrative, or simple prose, and they cry out, —

"Pol, me occidistis, amici,  
Non servastis, . . . cui sic extorta voluptas,  
Et demptus per vim mentis gratissimus error."

We cannot sympathize with them in their affliction. However prone Shakespeare is to the use of figurative language, it will not surely be denied that he uses words in their literal, at least six times as frequently as in a metaphorical meaning. It follows, then, that an emendation of the text, which, in clearing up an obscure passage, reduces a figurative expression to a literal one, is at least six times as probable as a different suggestion, which does just the reverse. So, also, while we admit that Shakespeare's lines are often left, designedly or carelessly, unrhythmical and unmetrical, it is certain that his versification is far more frequently regular than irregular; and therefore, to say the least, there is no presumption against a newly proposed reading, in that, while it dissipates obscurity or completes the sense, it also pieces out an imperfect verse, or restores smoothness to a halting one. Keep these observations in mind, and at least half of the criticisms which have been made upon the work of the MS. Annotator cease to have any weight whatever.

We have already spoken of the erroneous principles of what may be called the antiquarian and bibliomaniac mode of amending or criticizing the text of Shakespeare. Mr. Dyce's volume abounds with mistakes of this class, of which we can cite only the following instance. In the third act of the Comedy of Errors, Antipholus of Syracuse says to Luciana, —

“Far more, far more, to you do I [decline] *incline*.”

The MS. Annotator tells us to substitute *incline* for *decline*, which is the reading of the folio; and Mr. Dyce thus objects to the emendation.

“The manuscript corrector merely substituted a word more familiar to himself and those of his time than ‘*decline*.’ That the latter is what Shakespeare wrote, is not to be doubted: compare Greene. ‘That the loue of a father, as it was royall, so it ought to be impartiall, neither *declining* to the one nor to the other, but as deeds doe merite.’ *Pe-nelope's Web*, sig. G 4, ed. 1601.”

As only one authority is here cited for the use of the word with this unusual signification, we cannot help suspecting that in Greene's text, as well as in Shakespeare's, “*declining*” was substituted for “*inclining*” by a mere error of the press.

But however this may be, every one will admit that it is safer to try to ascertain what Shakespeare wrote from Shakespeare himself, than from Greene. Turning to Mrs. Cowden Clarke's Concordance, we find about twenty instances in which "*incline*" is used in its present ordinary signification. We select the following cases.

"I more *incline* to Somerset." — *Henry VI.*

"If he would *incline* to the people." — *Coriolanus.*

"We must *incline* to the king." — *Lear.*

"Would Desdemona seriously *incline*." — *Othello.*

Using the same convenient guide, we find some twenty cases more in which "*decline*" appears in what is now its usual meaning, and not one instance, except the very case now in question, to the contrary. Take the following examples.

"Who thrives, and who *declines*." — *Coriolanus.*

"At the height, are ready to *decline*." — *Julius Cæsar.*

"Spare speech: *decline* your head." — *Lear.*

"A great name should *decline*?" — *Henry VIII.*

In view of these cases, we presume even Mr. Dyce will admit that it "is not to be doubted" that the proper word is "*incline*." In his bibliomaniac ardor, he overlooked thirty or forty undeniable examples, which were close under his eyes, for the sake of quoting one doubtful case from a book which nobody but an antiquarian ever heard of.

But our remarks have already extended to an inconvenient length, and we must here leave the discussion of a fascinating topic. Our purpose has been, throughout, not so much to vindicate the great importance of Mr. Collier's discovery, as to show the causes why it has been so vehemently assailed, and the false principles of criticism which have been applied, in this case and in many others, to the examination of Shakespeare's text. But the question will finally be decided by the sure instinct of the public taste, which, we cannot doubt, will soon reverse the sentence of the present generation of editors, critics, and commentators, and finally incorporate into the received text far the larger portion of the emendations made by a poor player in the first half of the seventeenth century.